

REMARKS

STATUS OF CLAIMS

Claims 1-12 are pending.

Claims 1-2 and 5-12 are amended.

Claims 3 and 4 are cancelled without disclaimer or prejudice.

Thus, claims 1-2 and 5-12 remain pending for reconsideration, which is respectfully requested.

No new matter has been introduced in this Amendment. The foregoing rejections are hereby traversed.

THE CLAIMED INVENTION

Because users who share a virtual space are having conversation under diverse environments, an effective intuitive communication cannot be achieved if characters of the users are operated in the same way. Accordingly, the present invention provides that the characters of the users are operated in the way that they are optimized for the users in different environments.

In the present invention, operation commands, which are transmitted to chat devices in a virtual space according to an event, are not all the same. Each operation command depends on each chat device in a virtual space, that is, an environment of each user who operates the chat device. Suppose, for example, that user A joins the virtual space in which user B and C participate. A character of the user A represents user B and C, and it makes a movement of "welcome," which is a movement that can be attributed to the users B and C. Characters for already existing users B and C represent user A, and they make a movement of "hello," which are movements that can be attributed to users B and C. Because the present invention transmits operation commands that are suitable for each chat device, a character of each user can be operated in accordance with an environment of each user. As a result, users can carry out an intuitive communication.

REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1, 2 and 9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Tang (U.S. Patent 5,793,365).

Tang discloses an icon that shows a status of each user in a channel. In contrast, in the present invention, a character is not necessarily given to each and every user. For example, when a user A, B, and C are having a chat, there are cases where each user has only one character installed in each PC (PC-a, PC-b and PC-c). In such cases, each character is operated in accordance with each user's environment. For example, when a user A joins the channel in which user B and C are chatting, a character on the PC-a represents user B and C and makes a movement of "welcome." On the other hand, characters on the PC-b and PC-c represent user A and make a movement of "Hi!" In other words, a status indicated by a character on the PCa and the characters of PC-b and PC-c in response to the event that "user A has joined the channel" are different. On the other hand, in Tang, because each icon corresponds to each user in the channel, statuses indicated by icons on the user PCs are all the same responding to the same event (for example, a new participant in the channel).

More particularly, in the present invention, when any event occurs, operation commands are transmitted to each chat device from an administration device (i.e., in the present invention an administrations device 3, which can also be included in a chat server, transmits character operation commands to each chat device. See, page 5, line 18 to page 6, line 9; and page 17, line 13 to page 20, line 19; and FIGS. 1, 2, and 5. On the other hand, in Tang, it is assumed that a user status change information is transmitted from each client to each user terminal in the channel when the user status changes, and the display of icon is updated based on the change.

The independent claims 1, 5, 10, 11 and 12 are amended to clarify patentably distinguishing features of the present invention, which are deemed to place the application in condition for allowance. Support for the claim amendments can be found, for example, in page 5, line 18 to page 6, line 9; and page 17, line 13 to page 21, line 15; and FIGS. 1, 2, 3, and 5, of the present Application.

Independent claim 9 is amended to clarify the patentably distinguishing features of the invention regarding a "virtual character." Support for claim 9 can be found, for example, on page 28 of the present Application. Tang does not disclose or suggest, "[a] character linked to or installed in a chat device ..., comprising: *an input unit to receive character operation instructions; a communicator sending input operation instructions and receiving operation*

instructions for operating the character, *between the chat device and the character* (emphasis added).

Regarding amended independent claims 1, 5, 10, 11, and 12, in contrast to Tang, the amended independent claims 1, 5, 10, 11, and 12, using the recitation of amended claim 1 as an example, provide:

1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A communication promotion method used in a chat system having a plurality of chat devices which share any of virtual chat spaces being configured on a network and which send and receive messages among themselves, comprising:
 - linking or installing in each chat device a character that can be operated according to a predetermined operation instruction received by the chat device *via the network from a chat administrator of the chat space of the chat devices,*
 - detecting by the chat administrator* a predetermined event occurring within the chat space of the chat devices,
 - determining *at the chat administrator* a plurality of different operation instructions for operating each chat device character, based on the detected event,
 - determining *at the chat administrator* a plurality of different chat devices in the chat space that operate the characters, as determined different operation instruction destinations to be sent one of the determined plurality of the different operation instructions, and
 - sending by the chat administrator *the determined plurality of the different operation instructions* via the chat system to the determined different operation instruction destinations operating each character (emphasis added).

Further, Tang does not disclose or suggest the present invention's "*detecting by the chat administrator* a predetermined event occurring within the chat space of the chat devices." The Examiner relies on Tang, column 6, lines 63 to column 7, lines 19 (page 3 of the Office Action), however, the Tang disclosure referred to by the Examiner clearly discloses monitoring the user's activity at the computer and clearly does not disclose detecting activity in a chat space.

REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. §103:

Claims 3-8 and 10-12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Tang, in view of Gross (U.S. Patent 5,802,253). Because Tang does not disclose a "association table," the Examiner appears to assert that it is well known in the art and relies on Gross for disclosing an event driven rule based messaging. However, the claimed invention recites

an association table that relationally stores a predetermined event occurring in a chat space with participating chat devices, and a corresponding plurality of different predetermined operation instructions corresponding to a plurality of different operation instruction destinations to operate a character linked to or installed in each operation instruction destination chat device (claim 11).

First Tang does not disclose or suggest, "relationally stores a predetermined event occurring in a chat space" and "detecting a predetermined event, based on the association table." The Examiner appears to rely on Tang, column 6, lines 63 to column 7, lines 19 (page 3 of the Office Action), however, the Tang disclosure referred to by the Examiner clearly discloses monitoring the user's activity at the computer and clearly does not disclose detecting activity in a chat space.

Second, Tang is completely silent on the association table of the invention, therefore providing no motivation to combine with Gross. The Examiner asserts that the claimed association table is well known, however, Gross does not relate to chat space events, which substantially undermines the Examiner's well-known assertion. Because the Examiner fails to cite any art regarding the present invention's, "relationally stores a predetermined event occurring in a chat space" and "detecting a predetermined event, based on the association table," the present invention's association table is not well known and the Examiner's well known assertion is hereby traversed.

CONCLUSION

In view of the claim amendments and the remarks, it is believed that claims 1-2 and 5-12 are in condition for allowance, which is respectfully requested.


There being no further outstanding objections or rejections, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. An early action to that effect is courteously solicited.

Finally, if there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to attend to these matters.

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,
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